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Ouachita News Bureau

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By the OBU News Bureau

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Three students from Ouachita Baptist University's J.D. Patterson School of Natural Sciences were recognized for their research at the recent 2015 Arkansas IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) Conference in Fayetteville, Ark. Nearly 200 students from across the state competed.

Logan Bond, a junior computer science major from Prairie Grove, Ark., tied for first place in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Poster Division. Sydney Heslep, a senior biology major from Mountain Home, Ark., earned an honorable mention in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Poster Division. John Givler, a senior biology major from Monroe, La., earned second place in the Biological Sciences Poster Division.

Bond noted that attending the conference "gives the students a great experience in communicating our research effectively while allowing us to go and see other students, just like us, presenting their research under their mentors."

"There was such a broad range of information and research being presented that it was easy to wander around and find something that was interesting," Givler said.

It also provided "exposure to the scientific community," Bond added. "Being recognized for our presentation skills shows potential employers or graduate school opportunities that we are competitive applicants."

Bond's presentation, "Computational Investigations of the Enantiospecificity of a Mutated CYP2C9," was a result of research he performed this summer as part of Ouachita's Patterson Summer Research Program with Dr. Marty Perry, OBU's Nell I. Mondy Professor of Chemistry. The research modeled reactions between over-the-counter drugs and a mutated protein in the liver to quantitatively compare those results with data from the unmutated version of the protein.

Heslep's presentation, "PARP1 Interactions with Cannabinoids," was a result of research she performed this summer as part of Ouachita's Patterson Summer Research Program with Dr. Marty Perry and Dr. Lori Hensley, OBU's J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology. It investigates using cannabinoids as a potential treatment option for Ewing's Sarcoma, a pediatric bone cancer that typically has a low five-year survival rate.

"I was honored to receive an award because it gave recognition to the hard work I have put into my project," Heslep said, "and hopefully put more attention on the importance of cancer research and the use of cannabinoids as a more effective treatment option for Ewing's Sarcoma patients."

Givler's presentation, "Isolation of Soil Bacteria Producing Extended-Spectrum Antimicrobial Compounds," was a result of research he performed this summer as part of Ouachita's Patterson Summer Research Program

with Dr. Ruth Plymale, assistant professor of biology. The research focused on isolating antibiotic-producing bacteria from common soil samples and comparing them to similar microbes used in healthcare.

“This conference gave me the opportunity to share the exciting research that I participated in with people from across the region,” Givler said. “It was great to get recognition for my hard work and get feedback on how it can improve or evolve into future research.”

According to its website, brin.uams.edu, Arkansas INBRE is funded by a grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, under the Institutional Development (IDeA) Program of the National Institutes of Health. It seeks to develop a multidisciplinary research network, increase the biomedical research base in the state, provide research opportunities and enhance Arkansas’ future workforce with trained scientists.

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